UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1995/AB/L.2
20 January 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1995
1-3 and 6 February 1995

FOR INFORMATION

# CONFERENCE FACILITIES AT THE PREMISES OF UNICEF HEADQUARTERS

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in accordance with Executive Board decision 1994/R.3/8, adopted at the third regular session of 1994. In that decision, the Board requested the Executive Director to finalize the initial feasibility study of developing a conference facility at the premises of UNICEF headquarters (E/ICEF/1994/AB/L.15), taking into account its decision 1994/R.1/1, subparagraph (c) (E/ICEF/1994/13 (Part I)).

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report has been prepared in accordance with Executive Board decision 1994/R.3/8, adopted at the third regular session of 1994. In that decision, the Board requested the Executive Director to finalize the initial feasibility study of developing a conference facility at the premises of UNICEF headquarters (E/ICEF/1994/AB/L.15), taking into account its decision 1994/R.1/1, subparagraph (c) (E/ICEF/1994/13 (Part I)).

2. The secretariat is aware that Executive Board members hold a wide range of divergent views on the subject of conference facilities. The present report provides the additional information and cost estimates requested by the Board.

## II. CONFERENCE FACILITIES IN THE LABOUISSE HALL AT UNICEF HOUSE

Cost estimates

3. At the Executive Board's third regular session of 1994, many delegations raised questions about the cost of constructing conference facilities at UNICEF headquarters, whether at UNICEF House or at 633 Third Avenue, and many shared the concerns of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that details about recurrent costs associated with the facility had not been presented. In addition, the preliminary feasibility study included only partial construction costs related to the facility. The secretariat has researched comprehensive cost estimates for the conference facility in the Labouisse Hall, including all one-time installation costs (construction, furnishings and equipment and design services) and estimated annual operating costs. One-time installation costs would be approximately $1.2 million and annual operating expenses are estimated at $279,000 (see annexes I and II for details). It should be noted that the one-time installation costs detailed in annex I are indicative estimates that are subject to change, pending completion of final design plans, should it be decided to move forward with this project. Of the $279,000 required for annual operating costs, $264,000 is already included in the administrative and programme support budget estimates for the 1996-1997 biennium to cover leasing costs at UNICEF House. However, this amount would be more than offset by the need to construct and furnish a larger central conference room at 633 Third Avenue, which would not be necessary if the Labouisse Hall were to be used in the same manner as it is currently being utilized. The current flexible design of this room, with moveable furniture, permits its use as a multi-purpose facility.

4. Building a larger conference room at 633 Third Avenue would result in an estimated net loss of some 2,500 square feet, which would reduce by about 17 the number of workstations and/or offices at that location, as currently planned. The estimated average cost of this space (including operating expenses) would be about $65,000 per year. Additional one-time costs for furniture and equipment would amount to approximately $100,000. It should be noted that although a large conference room could be built at 633 Third Avenue, because of the configuration of the floors in the building, the existing space is not very suitable for such a facility because of low ceiling height and numerous support

columns. Major structural changes, including the removal of two structural support columns, would add some $200,000 to the cost of the project. While the Labouisse Hall contains about 5,385 square feet of space, the conference room at 633 Third Avenue would be about half that size, or about 2,500 square feet.

Cost-sharing between UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund

5. If the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) were to share the conference room facilities, it is hoped that some appropriate financing arrangements could be made for them to share with UNICEF both the one-time installation costs and the annual recurrent costs. The secretariat has submitted to UNDP and UNFPA the cost estimates as detailed in annexes I and II. In a letter dated 16 January 1995, UNDP informed UNICEF that its position on the issue did not differ greatly from what had previously been explained to the Executive Board. UNDP advised UNICEF that it was currently considering three options for its headquarters office location: consolidation into the two buildings at One United Nations Plaza (DC1) and 304 East 45th Street; consolidation into DC1 and 633 Third Avenue; and consolidating totally at 633 Third Avenue. Should UNDP choose the first or second options, it would prefer using the Labouisse Hall as a conference facility, but if the third option were selected, 633 Third Avenue would be its preferred site for the facility. Until UNDP management decided on what course of action to take, its Executive Board would continue to meet in the Economic and Social Council Chamber.

6. UNDP also noted in its letter that the conference facilities at 633 Third Avenue would be smaller than those at UNICEF House (see para. 4 above), based on the assumption that the facility would be located on one of the "tower" floors of the building. The UNDP secretariat stated that should UNDP consolidate at 633 Third Avenue, some of the larger lower floors could possibly be considered for use by the Executive Boards since they should be able to accommodate adequately the necessary meeting facilities.

Size of the conference facilities

7. Many delegations said that as currently laid out, the Labouisse Hall at UNICEF House was too small to accommodate the participation of observer delegations and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The secretariat has investigated the feasibility of expanding the Labouisse Hall to allow additional seating in the conference area and has found that because of structural considerations, the expansion would not be possible. As currently designed, the total seating capacity of the room (see annex III), excluding conference service staff, would be 141. This total includes seats for 39 delegations at the conference table and one seat directly behind each of those seats for other members of the delegations seated at the table. In addition, there would be 63 other seats around the perimeter of the room.

Availability of interpreters and other conference services staff

8. The cost estimates found in annex II include a full-time post for a conference room coordinator (G-5), which exists already (at G-4 level).

However, the estimates do not include the cost of interpreters or other conference services staff normally provided by the Office of Conference and Support Services of the United Nations Secretariat. On 7 October 1994, Conference Services informed UNICEF that United Nations conference facilities would continue to be made available to UNICEF at United Nations Headquarters and that the required staff support could also be made available, as needed, to service facilities outside the premises of the United Nations. UNICEF has been informed by Conference Services that the design of the interpreters' booths for the proposed conference facility would meet the required standards.

Financing of conference facility

9. Since the establishment of a conference facility at the Labouisse Hall cannot be financed either entirely or partially from existing or future resources without diverting funds from UNICEF programmes, it is obligatory to identify the sources of funds for meeting both one-time and recurrent costs before this project can move ahead any further. In paragraph 27, annex I to its resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly encouraged the Executive Boards of the relevant funds and programmes "to make the necessary facilities available as soon as possible without prejudice to the resources of existing programmes and projects". Therefore, other sources of income and the possibility of donations-in-kind need to be explored and identified.

## III. CONFERENCE FACILITIES AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

10. UNICEF and UNDP, in consultation with Conference Services, have explored several possibilities for adapting existing United Nations conference facilities for use by their respective Executive Boards. UNICEF asked Conference Services whether it would be possible to combine conference rooms 5 and 6, which would provide a large conference table as well as the necessary facilities for interpreters, conference officers and press officers, etc. Conference Services replied that it was not possible because of the time and cost entailed in removing and repositioning the partition between the two rooms prior to and following each session.

11. UNICEF and UNDP jointly requested the Buildings Management Service of the United Nations Secretariat to consider the possibility of modifying the Economic and Social Council Chamber by constructing a portable podium, which would create a floor-level podium similar to the one used at the World Summit for Children. In a memorandum dated 2 September 1994, the Buildings Management Service stated that it would cost $105,000 and require closing the conference room for 48 hours before and after each meeting to erect and dismantle the podium. The time required to prepare the construction documents, obtain bids and complete the installation would be approximately 30 weeks, 12 of which would be for the fabrication of custom-made furniture. In addition, the secretariats were informed that the set-up could not accommodate seating for advisers immediately behind the podium. In an October 1994 follow-up meeting with Conference Services, the Buildings Management Service and UNDP, UNICEF reiterated its suggestion to replicate the floor-level podium set-up used at the World Summit for Children, which would use existing tables and chairs and require only additional wiring for the podium and chairs for advisers. The Buildings

Management Service subsequently prepared a revised estimate of $90,000, with an estimated construction time of 30 weeks.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

12. As detailed in annex I, the cost of constructing, furnishing and equipping a conference facility in the Labouisse Hall at UNICEF House would be approximately $1.2 million, in addition to recurrent operating costs of $279,000 per year. At the present time, there is no source of funding for these costs. While the United Nations would provide conference services staff for Executive Board meetings held at the Labouisse Hall, its size would limit participation by observer delegations.

13. If the conference facility is not constructed, UNICEF will be able to use the conference facilities at the United Nations. If UNICEF, UNDP and the Buildings Management Service could reach an agreement on a minimal readjustment of the Economic and Social Council Chamber (see para. 10 above), it may suit better the requirements of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, ensure the use of smaller conference rooms for informal consultations and meet the concerns of some delegations which have to attend other meetings at United Nations Headquarters.

ANNEX I

Budget estimates for one-time installation costs of conference facilities in the Labouisse Hall at UNICEF House

(Estimated at 5,385 square feet)

| | Estimated cost (United States dollars) |
|---|---|
| I. CONSTRUCTION BUDGET | |
| Demolition | 14 000 |
| Acoustical panels | 35 000 |
| Lath and acoustics | 28 233 |
| Painting and wall covering | 10 078 |
| Flooring | 22 848 |
| Woodworking | 127 000 |
| Glazing | 10 600 |
| Stone flooring | 24 000 |
| Raised flooring - interpretation booths | 7 184 |
| Folding wall | 16 500 |
| Steel support for folding wall | 7 200 |
| Sprinkler | 14 770 |
| Heating, ventilating and air conditioning | 35 080 |
| Electric | 77 390 |
| Security allowance | 5 000 |
| Shoring allowance | 17 000 |
| General conditions | 52 114 |
| Contractor's fee | 37 703 |
| Subtotal, I | 541 700 |
| II. DESIGN FEES | 44 000 |
| III. FURNITURE | |
| 208 seats (includes two drafting rooms) | 135 000 |
| Tables (main conference centre) | 140 000 |
| Tables for two drafting rooms | 10 000 |
| Subtotal, III | 285 600 |
| IV. EQUIPMENT AND CABLING | |
| Sound system | 70 000 |
| Interpretation booths system for six languages, plus one additional booth for sound engineer | 60 000 |
| Electronic voting/tally system | 35 000 |
| Audio/video distribution | 35 000 |
| Remote viewing from drafting rooms | 50 000 |
| Cabling and wiring | 20 000 |
| Subtotal, IV | 270 000 |
| Total, I-IV | 1 141 300 |
| V. CONTINGENCY (5 per cent) | 57 000 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 1 198 300 |

ANNEX II

Conference facilities in the Labouisse Hall at UNICEF House: estimated annual recurrent costs

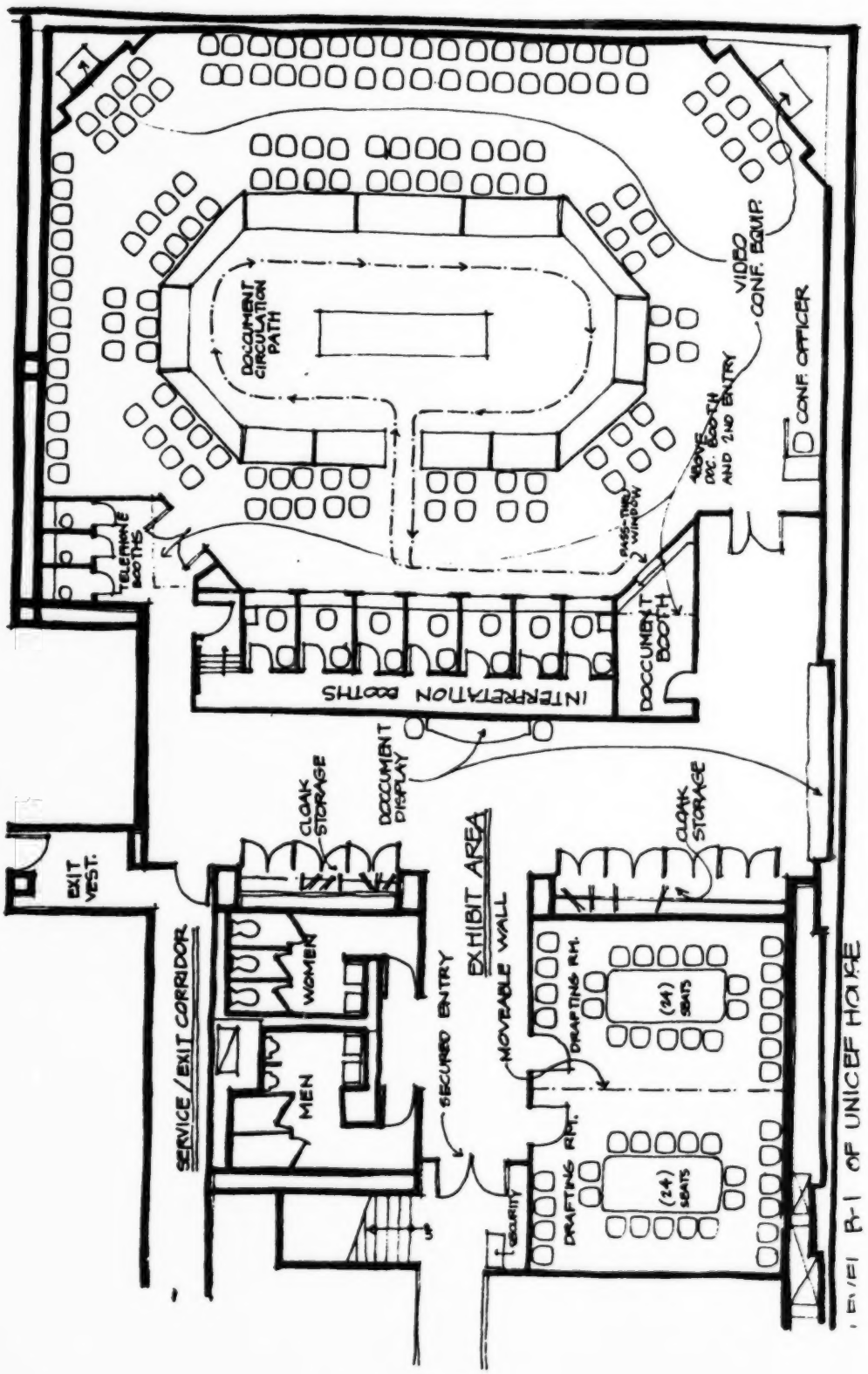
| | United States dollars |
|---|---|
| Lease costs | |
| Fixed rent (5,385 rentable square feet X $32.50) | 175 000 a/ |
| Operating costs and electricity (5,385 rentable square feet X $8.00) | 43 000 a/ |
| Expendable conference room supplies | 5 000 |
| Staffing costs | |
| One full-time post of conference room coordinator | 56 000 b/ |
| Total | 279 000 |

a/ It should be noted that these costs are currently included in the regular UNICEF budget estimates covering UNICEF House (see para. 4).

b/ Of this amount, $46,000 is currently included in the 1994-1995 administrative and programme support budget.

Figure

PROPOSED LAYOUT OF CONFERENCE FACILITY IN THE LABOUISSE HALL AT UNICEF HOUSE

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